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 **MASIA** | 2015-06-23

# La Masia - Controversial decisions, negligence and irresponsibility

*How it has come to this? All the problems explained*

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**A**fter a Copa del Rey match in 2010, Pep Guardiola proudly declared, "There is no bigger victory than being able to debut a player from La Masia. It's even bigger than winning a title."

Managing a football academy isn't simple. Several human and technical factors come into play, starting from effort to luck. It's far from being an exact science. There isn't a magical formula that guarantees success, nor there is only one valid methodology to manage talent. Nevertheless, FC Barcelona for the past 20 years gave the impression that they know exactly how to nurture future world-class players, using failsafe methods. But that is a misconception; there are dozens of players that will never make it to the first team for every Xavi or Piqué. The club has had its fair share of rights and wrongs since Oriol Tort – and later Johan Cruyff – revolutionized how youth development was strategized by Barcelona, it led to a golden age and the glorious period in the club's history.

The formula yielded results, and that was a special reason for culés to be proud of their club. Unfortunately that changed since 2010, when Sandro Rosell became FC Barcelona's president and kickstarted a tide of changes that greatly damaged the club's prized facilities, the future of hundreds of young footballers and the way La Masia is looked at by the entire world.

From a pristine and admired philosophy to a transfer embargo that tarnished FC Barcelona, not only as a brand, but as a reason to question if the club was really becoming just like any other football-based company.

## **A UNIQUE KIND OF COACHING**

Barcelona has been, on its most successful years, a coaches' club. La Masia, more than its extraordinary youth products that turned into world-class players, has based its model on the strength and footballing philosophy of its coaches, knowing very well it was harder to find good coaches than good players. It is the coaching success that allows its most promising youngsters to one day

continuously feature at the Camp Nou.

But no matter how well the job is done in La Masia, the final step lies with the first-team coach. And things have changed since Pep Guardiola left. The Catalan manager gave 28 different players their dream debut with the first team on the four years he was coaching the first team. Tito Vilanova only allowed Planas to make his debut, and barely used players like Montoya, Bartra, Dos Santos and Thiago, the latter a player who eventually was sold for peanuts at the end of the season to pay for the transfer fees of new acquisitions.

Tata Martino, signed on a whim by Rosell, and according to Bartomeu "someone who has more Barça DNA than most Masia coaches," barely played La Masia prospects. And sadly, the situation has yet to change with Luis Enrique on his perfect first season. He even went as far as forbidding Masia coaches from attending his training sessions, contrary to what had been the practice for several years in La Masia.

## THE CURRENT SITUATION

During Luis Enrique's time at La Masia, it was shown that he knew how to correctly guide the players. Under him, Barça B was a disciplined team that had talented players shining in all areas of the pitch: Montoya, Bartra, Fontas, Muniesa, Romeu, Sergi Roberto and Jonathan dos Santos, with older players like Nolito and Soriano were the pillars of the team who played well and achieved great results.

That changed under Eusebio. The development of players became secondary, and the technical staff started to focus on a defensive and conservative approach that prioritized results over the players' development.

Right now, La Masia is going through its most delicate period in history: a first team coach who, up until now, has not shown much trust on the academy; a Barcelona B side that passed through two coaches, stalling the young ones' development; youngsters leaving the club at every opportunity; and a decision by FIFA due to the transfer embargo that prohibited some of the best La Masia prospects from even training. And, above all that, Bartomeu finished his term as Barcelona president without addressing those key issues before the transfer window, when many talented players are set to leave, such as Marc Bartra and Ayoub Abou.

In five years, La Masia went from tenacity and persistence to a poorly hidden lack of passion. From the happiness to include an academy player on the first team, to desperately searching for substitutes to academy players who leave the Camp Nou.

The Masia coaches can see it, the kids and fans too. Meanwhile, the people who are supposed to take care of the club act with indifference and make experiments with the management of an academy which has been, for years, the standard of how well this club was run.

To win or to develop players? The answer remains the same, do both.

## **THE CONCEPTS AND THE MODEL**

La Masia, as a concept of a very clear way of understanding football and how to develop players, won worldwide admiration and recognition in 2011, when Messi, Iniesta and Xavi became the three Ballon D'Or finalists.

That was the biggest prize given to an old idea, born in the early '70s, kickstarted by Laureano Ruiz, which was then used in the first team by Johan Cruyff and was continued in the '90s and that Pep Guardiola helped reach its apex in the 21st century. An idea converted into a cultural phenomenon thanks to how Barcelona played and the results they have achieved. Two Champions League finals and the 2011 Club World Cup were played with seven players coming from La Masia. Nine homegrown players followed later. In November 2012, Tito Vilanova managed to use all 11 players coming from La Masia against Levante.

Those admirable victories made the Barcelona method a hit. Around the world, clubs wanted to know the secret formula, which caused many Barcelona academy coaches, without a proper curriculum or knowledge, to depart and work on several foreign countries. Money in exchange for the magical potion. The results, logically, weren't up to scratch; most didn't deliver what was expected these coaches returned home. The method is much more than a recipe, some development classes and a few years' experience as La Masia coach.

La Masia, as a concept is now questioned. What happened? After reaching the sky, Barcelona's academy is going through bad times. Culés ask why.

## **GOODBYE HALCYON DAYS**

The results from Barça B and the main academy teams are going from bad to worse, and the board members, acting like doctors, can't find what's wrong. Stability is the basis to form players. Laporta (2003-2010) trusted the duo Ramon Alexanko-Albert Benaiges to put things in motion: an ex-player to show tradition and respect (Alexanko) and a specialist (Benaiges). Their responsibility reached every single La Masia team: from the B team to the youngest squads.

Rosell (2010-2014) tried to repeat the formula with different ingredients: Guillermo Amor and Albert Puig. But it was done with a different management that caused personal and professional issues. They did not manage Barça B and Juvenil A, but by Zubizarreta, Sporting Director at the time.

Bartomeu (2014) tried to return to the original plan implemented by Laporta's board and hired Jordi Roura and Aureli Altimira, two ex-players used to professional football but without any actual experience in managing an academy.

At the end of July, a new president will be elected. Maybe they will try to hire an ex-player to manage over 300 players, but with the current dynamics, without actual specialists in the forefront, important details will be missed.

Is the situation irreversible? No, but even inside the academy people are waiting for a plan to stop the negativity and recover the time that was lost. They wait for a leader to step on the breaks and to an end to degeneration plaguing La Masia. They wait for the best development director, even if he isn't friends with the president, like Amor and Roura were with Bartomeu.

## THE CORE AND IT'S IDEALS

Success or failure in choosing the right players, the first big decision the club must make, will determine if there will be a generation with real aspirations to get into the first team, the last objective in the process.

What profile must the players have? The most important is that they are intelligent and able to understand the game. Then, their speed and technical ability is looked into, and, lastly, their physical capacity. The club must look for talent, real talent.

The goalkeepers must be tall and be able to play with their feet; the center backs must be able to handle the defensive transitions. Barcelona is used to signing defensive midfielders from other teams to convert them into defenders, the

defensive midfielder must be intelligent, have a great vision, superb technique and very fast thinking. And the forwards must be fast on their decisions and be able to score.

The scout's job is fundamental and is far from being well paid. All of them charge a small fixed salary, plus bonuses depending on the players that are signed and, naturally, from the players that arrive into the first team. The observers are ex-players or die hard culés and their main satisfaction is one day seeing one of the kids they discovered playing at the Camp Nou.

Does the scouting at Barcelona work? Are there good players? Do we have winning generations coming? Yes, we have excellent footballers coming through, but given the club's dimension we need more than they are offering right now. Why do we have this situation? Because not always the people who have intervened in the process have followed the same direction.

The club's policy chosen by the Development Director (Alexanko, Amor and now Roura) must be clear and always be thinking of what's best for Barcelona, without third party interests or hiring friends.

2 years ago (and this wasn't the only case), a Spanish youngster was signed following orders from one board member without a single report from the Masia offices. Right now, the player is no longer at the club.

The ego clashes have also been a problem. The division of tasks from the Rosell era (Zubizarreta with first team and Juvenil A; Amor with the rest of La Masia teams) damaged the winning system in a serious way.

Albert Valentin, Zubi's close assistant, and Albert Puig, La Masia coordinator and Amor's right hand man, didn't speak to each other. Rosell then gave all the power to Puig. And with that, things changed: some historical coaches left, and the way we approached signings became way more aggressive. Puig beat Madrid in the fight for the best young Spanish players: Nico, Ansu, Monchu, Miranda, Abel and Enric.

## **WHAT CAUSED THE TRANSFER EMBARGO?**

Puig's struggle with Madrid ("we wanted to aspire greatness", according to some people) went from Spain to the rest of the world and went against the law. 37 investigations led to 9 foreign youth footballers forbidden from playing. A disaster to the kids. And also for the club, punished for everyone to see.



FIFA forbid the club from registering new players during two transfer windows and a severe penalty fee. Bartomeu fired Puig and Amor, discreetly putting the guilt on them as the people responsible for it. Four young players (Ruiz, Kubo, Sousia, Adekanye) left, tired of waiting. Chendri has started playing after he completed 16 years. The rest (Lederman, Gyeolhee, Lee and Seung-Ho Paik) are wondering about their future or waiting to be 18 years old so they may play again.

Valentin, just like Zubizarreta, saw things differently. He believed in Catalan football and that the club shouldn't pay much money for 17 or 19 year old kids even if we do miss pearls like Asensio or Odegaard, signed by Real Madrid.

Nowadays Jordi Roura is also focusing on Catalunya. 70% of the youth players are catalan, 15% are Spanish and the other 15% are foreigners. Espanyol, Cornellà and Damn, Catalan clubs have benefited from Barça's internal struggles and that's why Espanyol is won the League on several youth categories.

"They are getting the scouting wrong. They are looking for the Globetrotters and players like Messi, Xavi, Iniesta, Pique, Valdés... you only find them once. There aren't copies of them out there", said a coach from another Catalan club. The struggle between the traditional vision (all the power belongs to the coach) and the new managers doesn't help the selection of players to improve.

Barcelona invests €1.5 million in La Masia for players with a very clear future. There is room for 82 players in the building, but only 68 are currently living there. From the 45 teenager players, specialists think only 15 of them could one day achieve glory. Money and time spent in vain.

The kids attend the Lleo XIII school and the club, which has also hired teachers to provide extra lessons and help them with learning different languages. "It's been two years since the grades have been getting worse, even though our dedication has been the same", explains Carles Folguera, La Masia director. However, the club no longer punishes players for bad grades, which was a common practice.

"We inform the families and we work to recover the grades, but in a sporting manner there aren't any sanctions. We do look into bad behavior in school, in the bus, at La Masia... there we do have punishments, like not being called up or not playing on the starting team".

## THE DEMANDS HAVEN'T LOWERED

Once a player starts wearing Blaugrana his footballing development begins to provide him with his best performance. It's an extremely difficult task where there's one key figure: the coach.

Are La Masia coaches the best? Do they have the best development? Do they know our philosophy and know how to pass it along? If the answers were positive, the success is unquestionable. And since it isn't, something is happening.

The coaches are hired and fired according to who is giving the orders, without actually caring about their quality. The good ones should be kept and the renewal should be made while focusing on other variables to keep the basic concepts in the development of players: continuity and stability. Without long term projects there isn't success for the academy. With a common idea, the coaches can work with autonomy. They know there are nonnegotiable principles, but the current feeling is that that is no longer the focus.

The expected superiority during matches requires a very demanding and intense load of work in training sessions. By default, Barcelona will win 9 out of 10 matches. The 10th (normally against Espanyol) is the hard one. What is required of the players is getting easier, and now the club is getting similar to all the other clubs.

## THE GOOD ONES

The Methodology Department, lead by the masters Paco Seirullo and Joan Vila would normally come to the rescue, but the orders, once again, aren't clear.

Zubizarreta created this department but Albert Puig never liked it. The theoretical teachings weren't used on the pitch. And even worse, "some were so heavy that kids would fall asleep. Some players would even listen to them, but the coaches would change their orders. They would basically say "That's good, but let's stop worrying about that and go for the wins".

Having La Masia players and coaches ignore our methodology and philosophy to go for the easy wins has damaged the Academy grievously.

Following this train of thought, the coaches now rely heavily on the African players, that are ahead physically. But, until now, none of them have played at the Camp Nou.



Each passing day the teams are playing with a different style than the original idea, and there are matches where the classical Barcelona football is barely recognizable. It's not accepted anymore that one of the higher ups, those who defend the philosophy, can correct a coach during a training session.

The academy (counting out Barça B) is made of 15 teams, with 6 full time coaches and 9 amateur coaches. The professional coaches work on the Juvenil, Cadete, the Infantil A and the coordinator of the Futbol 7 (for kids from 8-12 years old). All of them, professionals and amateurs, need to improve.

Only two of them, Garcia Pimienta and Quique Alvarez have arrived at Barcelona's first team after being brought up in La Masia with the method. The accumulated experience is important, even though their age requires of them masters and other degrees.

Real Madrid, for example, has it. Since they don't have a development method for the kids, they depend on their coaches' experience. For that reason, nowadays they have people like Zidane, Ramis, De La Red, Guti, Solari and Rojas working on the academy. They bet on names, not the method.

## CHOOSING

Barcelona has another problem: the squads are too big. The Juvenil, Cadet and Infantil teams have 25 players, a number that make the kids sent to the bench to have less minutes than those just as good as them playing for other clubs; for example, Ajax keeps their teams with 18 players. That massification stops that there are players being promoted from their categories, barring exceptions, something that slows down the best players' evolution.

Why does it happen? Because the hard decisions are not being made. Roura and his teams should have already sent 30 players away. It's a painful decision, but risks must be made. "And if afterwards they are successful at Real Madrid? What will be said about me?", is the constant fear.

It's surprising the lack of fundamentals in many players. An ex-Juvenil A coach noted "how poor they are in the air. There were kids who were afraid to jump!". Aerial plays are not worked on. Shooting practice is also scarce.

"Touch it right away. Do not walk with it, touch it!".

If that's the main word, how will the players learn how to dribble? Without

dribbling, no one beats their man and there is no superiority to open the closed defenses.

These are basic failures.

The "we must form players" has now turned into "we must win".

Even though it seems like a lie, right now Barcelona doesn't work to improve its players technique, like used to happen on the previous generations. Gerard Piqué wasn't good in the air, even though he was tall: after months of hard work his evolution was superb; Sergio Busquets also improved his controls with a specific work.

In 2010, everything ended. Another step backwards.

## THE TREASURE THAT IS THE PHILOSOPHY

Barcelona's greatest treasure is the philosophy. That Messi, Xavi, Iniesta, Puyol, Piqué, Pedro, Sergio... players with different ages that speak the same footballing language and converted the club in a worldwide reference and their team as the best in history, has to do with the idea.

Johan Cruyff installed his philosophy in 1988, and immediately on the academy they started to work on said plan. The kids from the 80s and 90s made up to 2.500 training sessions under a determined method before ever playing for the first team.

When Pep Guardiola arrived at the Camp Nou bench, he reaped the results and brought the method to its highest level.

But what is the method?

It's the development programme that Barcelona gives to all players, be it on individual or collective level during the whole year and on all areas, which means: technical aspects, tactical, physical and psychological. The club should be focusing in improving the players, and not in getting results. As seen above, the reality is now different.

For some, the results are the thermometer to measure the season's success. With Amor ahead and Puig as coordinator, Barcelona won 13 out of 14 competitions from last season, and Bartomeu boasted.

This season, the President no one voted for must be worried. Has so much

changed in only one year? Of course not. The objectives in a club like Barcelona should be made for the long term and it must be directed to form players that can one day become professionals than to number the trophies won in the academy. Without a single doubt the first aspect guarantees the second will happen.

The reality is that Barcelona has lost much terrain to Espanyol, even with the abysmal difference in investment in both academies: €13 million in total spent by Barcelona, while Espanyol spends only €3 million. Something isn't working.

## COMPETITION AND DEVELOPMENT

Nowadays it's Jordi Roura who is the responsible, but he's only been doing it for a few months. Does Barça B being relegated means a lot? It's evident that in a competitive level, it is. Winning is part of the mentality of players that wish to be part of a selected group of chosen ones, and Barça B's natural habitat should be the Second Division.

But if the club had a clear objective and how to achieve it, relegation wouldn't be so dramatic.

## THE 16 YEAR OLD BARRIER

Not all players will get into the first team. The reality is so evident that the coaches and educators at La Masia work since the first day to prepare all kids for the day they eventually leave the club. It's always traumatic. How could a kid be in a better team than Barcelona?

Even though it seems like a lie, during the last few years there are many other places where kids from La Masia have been well received. For two reasons: one is technical and the other is economical. The first has to do with the great successes from the Guardiola Era.

The most important thing for the academy is that the first team coach opens the door to the youth players. Guardiola did it. What would have he done without Busquets and Pedro with him? The good work at the academy made the system die due to its success. The young players would think: "If the Barça B players are having to leave, they will also fire me".

The second reason, economical, comes from the law. Barcelona renews its players without any problems until they are 16 years old, the moment when they

can sign their first worker contract and, backed by the FIFA rules, change clubs whenever they meet some requisites.

The English teams, that do not invest in forming players, spend the money in foreign talents already developed.

## **STANDARD OFFERS**

When Barcelona renews a Cadet player (15 years old), said player remains with the club for the 3 following seasons (the last 3 stages of the development period), for which he will receive €8.000, €10.000 and €12.000 per year. The club offers this standard contract and the option of playing for the Juvenil B right away. Only the best will reach Juvenil A. Let's say, that before the renewal is signed, the young player received offers from Liverpool, Arsenal, City, Juventus or Roma, that offer €150.000 per year and a plan to play for their Juvenil team, immediately train with the B team and actually think of playing for their first team.

The answer? Fàbregas left. And Piqué. And many others. Nowadays the Juvenil is failing to score goals. It has been ransacked in the last few seasons: players like Sanabria, Buenacasa, Canós and Olmo all left to clubs like Roma, Juventus and Liverpool.

Their agents have worked against the club. Kids as young as 12 years old already have agents and Barcelona hasn't found a way (or hasn't had the courage) to act against this premature mercantilization. In Europe, only Ajax refuses to deal with agents that represent younger than 16.

## **DANGEROUS COMMITMENTS**

Regarding that matter, FIFA is thinking of making a crucial step and creating a law that forbids agents charge for commissions before a player comes of age.

Barcelona should fight against that trying to have their loyalty from its players, having a specific development for them and convincing them that they will receive what is necessary to one day become a great footballer. Be it at Barcelona or not. But without dangerous commitments (like it happened with Oier, Bartra, Dos Santos or Tello), where contracts were signed only after they were promised a place on the first team, even though most of them weren't ready or good enough.

The option of loaning out players is not being used properly. Pep Segura, former coach at Barcelona, Liverpool and Olympiacos, for instance, believes a B team's squad must have 10% of its players going to the first team, 40% should be loaned and the rest is let go to open space to the Juvenil players coming up. Hard decisions must be made so the system doesn't get stagnated.

Right now, it doesn't work like that. The damage is too big, keeps expanding at an alarming rate and Barcelona are hemorrhaging talented players.

## THE DECAY OF LA MASIA IN NUMBERS

Xavi Torres (Betis)

Nolito, Planas and Fontas (Celta)

Thiago (Bayern Munich)

Victor Vazquez (Brugge)

Busquets, Pedro, Montoya and Masip (Barcelona)

Victor Sanchez, Abraham (Espanyol)

Rochina, Oier (Granada)

Botia (Olympiakos)

Romeu (Chelsea)

A total of 16 players who played at the same time in La Masia became pro footballers. A few remained in the elite, others keep searching for their place. They were part of the 2008/09 squad. The first with Lucho in Barça B and Pep in the first team.

On the next two seasons after that, where both Pep and Lucho were still at the club, 9 more players were ready:

Bartra, Rafinha, Sergi Roberto (Barcelona)

Soriano (Salzburg)

Muniesa (Stoke)

João dos Santos (Villarreal)

Sergi Gomez (Celta)

Tello (Porto)

Deulofeu (Sevilla)

A total of 25 elite players in 3 seasons. What happened to each of them after that depended on several factors: luck with injuries, personal maturity, choice of team, adaptation...

In 2011/12, Eusebio arrived on the B team. After 3 and a half seasons in charge, these are the players he developed:

Uri Rosell (Sporting Lisboa)

Cuenca (Deportivo)

Patric (Lazio)

Lomban (Elche)

Luis Alberto (Malaga)

Denis Suarez (Sevilla)

Munir, Sandro (minutes with the first team)

Being generous, Eusebio got 8 players he formed now playing professional football. From 25 with Lucho in 2 years, to 8 with Eusebio in almost 4 years.

It has nothing to do with "being lucky with generation of players" each coach got. It has to do with the work done by each of them.

Eusebio worked with players like Grimaldo, Samper, Adama, Dongou, Denis Suarez, Adama, Sandro and Munir and only managed to win only 33% of the points on his last season, which eventually led to Barça B's relegation.

But the results are what mattered the least.

La Masia, and especially the B team are about forming players. And after 4 years since Lucho left the B team, we are still to see any B player have actual minutes in the first team. The ones that did (Montoya, Bartra and Rafinha) were formed under Lucho, not Eusebio.

So the man handpicked by Rosell to take charge of Barça B not only got the team relegated, but managed to sign questionable players (Femenia, Lobato, Lomban), but still wasted one of the most talented generations the club have ever had.

Grimaldo, Samper, Denis Suárez, Dongou, Adama, Sandro and Munir would be the backbone to one of the strongest teams in Second Division, and not only should not have got relegated, but said players should already be ready to be first team players, which is not the case.

## WHAT IS HAPPENING AT LA MASIA?

Something is happening at La Masia. When the current B team coach says in a presser that "La Masia values have been degenerating and that can now be seen on Barça B" it means something has gone wrong. These words were said by Jordi Vinyals, who was trying to make his players wake up, but it made all the alarms go off.

That's why Albert Benaiges, a coach who worked in La Masia for 2 decades was interviewed recently.

About Vinyal's words, Benaiges is convinced it was nothing more than a strategy to motivate his players: "Vinyals wanted to get them excited so they all show the class they have".

However, it does not mean his words were not correct: "The B team has been relegated several times and we never saw a change of coaches, it has to do with the current generation. We are talking about players with bad attitude, that do not like to be subbed off and that was never before seen in La Masia. Up to 4 players arriving late to training sessions... Lack of responsibility is behind all that".

## THE PRESENT

The current situation isn't good, and the fans are asking "why?". What has changed in the last few years?

Benaiges has his own view: "The departures of Alexanko and Amor started a degeneration in La Masia, and time only made it worse. There have been changes in some situation, like, for example, when a player from the lower categories misbehaves and is punished for it. But when the same happens to a better player, he suffers no sanctions. This has been going on for years, and that is not good for the players. When I was at the club, we were very strict about such matters. Once, for instance, a Cadete player misbehaved at home and at school. We made him train with the Benjamins (kids) and carry their training gear. Besides that, we didn't let him travel with the Spanish or the Catalan NT and took away the contract he had with Nike. This ended up serving him on the future".

## THE CAMEROONIAN PLAYERS

Benaiges continues: "As soon as Rosell/Bartomeu took the club's reins, there was a case that marked their management. It's about two very promising players from Cameroon, who all the coaches wanted, and the board decided to get rid of



both. Now, one of them is Eintracht Frankfurt's best player, and the other is in England. But before getting there they wandered in some countries and lived off the streets. And it all happened due to one person. I explained this to Jordi Mestre during two lunch meetings and he didn't want to hear me. One of the players was lost in Paris with his father in prison for not having a proper visa, charged because someone decided he wasn't old enough to play for Barcelona, when I had travelled personally to Cameroon to make sure his age was real."

## THE DOWNFALL

The way to measure if a football academy is doing well isn't results, but the perception that the players are progressing and improving during their journey from Benjamin to first team players in La Masia. It would be much easier to judge according to the results, but it does not work like that. The teams may win everything in a permanent fashion, but, even so, the development process might be deficient.

The footballing work in La Masia has suffered a downfall since 2010 for one main reason: the loss of value in terms of the masters. The arrival of Sandro Rosell as President meant many changes:

He got rid of Alexanko, someone who was being characterized for having and using the values that were solid and non-negotiable; fired something as intelligent and wise as Capellas; sent away and humiliated Benaiges, who was the man responsible for all of the development process; vetoed, lied to and forced Óscar García Junyent to leave.

The list of masters, teachers and coaches that left is getting too big, and now even Rosell's people, Puig and Amor, were fired by Bartomeu, and even Quique Costas, maybe the coach who could interpret the best how a player was progressing through the ranks.

The question isn't losing a match or a trophy, but: how many La Masia players have actually progressed in their development since 2010? How has the immense talent from 1991, 1992 or 1995 been managed?

The basic problem with La Masia is the developments of players. Apart from a short period of time during Joan Gaspart Presidency, the cantera has never been in such much danger. Not even during the darkest times of 2000-2003, no one

was crazy enough to mess with the development of players. That was the time Lionel Messi came to Barcelona, for instance.

Until 2010, when Rosell intervened to make his mark, and well, he managed to. The person responsible for La Masia then was Jose Ramon Alexanko, a righteous man. His honesty, strength and clear ideas were never questioned. With Alexanko, a kid was a kid, a father was a father, the development was above everything else and there was only one thing more important than it: FC Barcelona. Not even money, the hissy fits, not even the threats could make the director change his mind. There could be someone younger, but never more trustworthy. If someone did something wrong, he would pay for it, even he was the most promising player. And who needed help, would always get it.

Alexanko was the righteousness and was decapitated so Sandro Rosell could give the job to his close friend Amor. And on that day, the problems started.

## FROM LUCHO TO EUSÉBIO

Eusébio arrived in Barça B in 2011 to replace Luis Enrique, who had been very successful. Rosell had lied to Óscar García, who had been prepared and was doing a great job at Juvenil A beforehand, and ended up giving Barça B to Eusébio, who was criticized from the beginning for his lack of ambition and a losing and conformist mentality.

Even though the results were decent on his first two seasons, the football simply wasn't good enough. Eusébio didn't follow the Barcelona philosophy, and the team only survived due to the individual talent of its players, even though not even these players were being developed correctly.

On his third season, after finishing the first half with only a handful of points, Eusébio trusted on a few Juvenil A players who made Barça B finish in 3rd position on Second Division. The results got him his renewal, leading to the next season that led to his sacking and the relegation of the B team.

## CONCLUSION

La Masia's collapse wasn't accidental or led because of a series of unfortunate events, but due to the poor management decisions by Sandro Rosell and Bartomeu during their terms as Barcelona presidents. If nothing changes, the most prized football academy in the world will meet its demise and never be the

same again. Changes need to be made as soon as possible and the first step is electing a president that understands and respects one of the key pieces of Barcelona's identity.

Grup 14 would like to thank Xavi Torres for collaborating with the organization and enabling thousands of foreign Barcelona fans to be correctly informed about La Masia's situation.

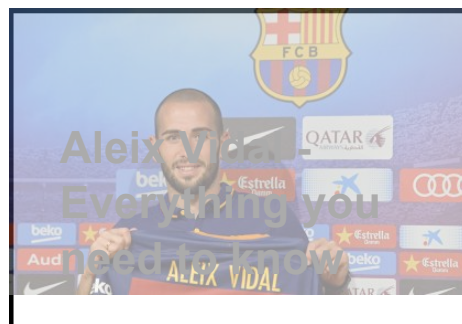
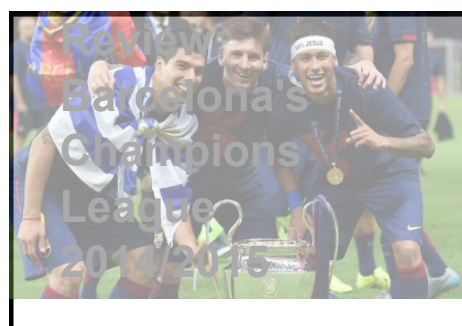
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